

Weekly Market Bulletin

State of New Hampshire
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From Your Commissioner... **Farm-Restaurant Linkages Building Steadily in N.H.**

The landmark Blake's Creamery restaurant on Manchester's West Side last week was offering a "New Hampshire Growers' Breakfast" menu that featured a lineup of six different meal choices, all made with ingredients from farms and processors right here in our state.

Blake's is a big supporter of the New Hampshire Farm to Restaurant initiative, which for the past two years has been building connections between producers and chefs to boost markets for high quality locally grown foods.

The Blake's menu offered items like eggs to order, pancakes, waffles and omelets from makings from farms in Monroe, Milford, Tilton, Sanbornton and Concord, the Littleton Grist Mill and North Country Smokehouse in Claremont..

Grower dinners have been a key initiative of the Farm to Restaurant program, with the number increasing each of the past three years. Venues have ranged from popular family restaurants to grand hotels.

This year the program achieved a breakthrough in dealing with a chronic problem for growers trying to supply restaurants. A deal was negotiated with UPS for favorable rates on overnight delivery of farm products to New Hampshire restaurant kitchens. Next steps include publication of an expanded directory of growers seeking restaurant business and a survey of chefs to identify new sales opportunities for local farms.

The corporations controlling two of New Hampshire's dominant supermarket brands are discussing a possible merger or a sale of one to the other. Royal Ahold, which controls Stop & Shop, and Delhaize Groupe, owner of Hannaford's, are both based in Europe and conduct business worldwide.

Financial analysts have been forecasting for years that the global retail food industry will consolidate into just three or four dominant players, with one likely to be U.S.-based Wal-Mart, another one or two in Europe and one in Asia.

Always fascinating to attend the New England Green Pastures banquet and listen as the six state dairy farms of the year tell their stories. This year's crop reflected again the diversity and the industriousness of our region's outstanding producers.

Our own Pleasant View Farm from Monroe with 80 milkers and a grass-based feeding program was similar to the Vermont winner in size, while both the Massachusetts and Rhode Island farms had smaller herds. The Maine farm runs 440 cows in Clinton, a town said to produce a third of all the state's milk.

The Connecticut winner has close to 1,000 milkers and operates on 2,000 acres, mostly rented and scattered as far off as 30 miles in adjacent parts of New York and Massachusetts. The Massachusetts winner markets a considerable portion of its milk as raw, while the Rhode Island farm has its own bottling plant serving nearby consumers.

New Hampshire's newest dairy plant is up and operating. Walpole Creamery last Sunday greeted 400 grand opening customers eager to try its premium ice cream made from milk produced on the Tom and Sharleen Beaudry farm just up the road.

Owner Dave Westover says the enterprise will sell by the scoop at the plant and to retail and wholesale accounts in the Connecticut Valley region. It was outfitted from scratch with pasteurizer, separator, batch freezers and related gear, and Westover has completed the famed ice cream maker's course at Penn State.

Steve Taylor, Commissioner